



JACK MILLER  
Director

# County of San Diego

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOOD AND HOUSING DIVISION

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ELIZABETH POZZEBON  
Assistant Director

July 1, 2011

Dear Food Facility Operator,

The Food and Housing Division of the Department of Environmental Health regulates retail food businesses in the County of San Diego, issuing Health Permits and conducting routine inspections with the goal of ensuring safe food for the public. Recognizing that education is an important tool in preventing foodborne illnesses, the County of San Diego established a Food Handler Program on the late 1980's. The program has been so successful that it was used as one of the models to craft SB 602, the new California Food Handler Card Law that became effective on July 1, 2011.

The new California Food Handler Card law requires food handlers throughout the state of California to obtain a food handler card by taking a food safety training course and passing a test. **This new law does not apply to food handlers in the counties of San Diego, Riverside or San Bernardino; because these counties had pre-existing Food Handler Programs before the state law was enacted.**

Food handlers in the County of San Diego are not required to obtain a California Food Handler card; they are only required to meet the local Food Handler Program requirements. The County of San Diego Food Handler requirements have not changed, and are summarized below:

- All food handlers in the County of San Diego must possess either a valid Food handler Card issued by a County-authorized Food Handler Training School or pass a County of San Diego Food Handler Test, administered by the current Food Safety Manager, who passed a state-approved Food Safety Certification Exam.
- Food Handlers must pass tests with a score of 80% or better
- Food Handler cards or tests are valid for 3 years

As the new California Food Handler Law is implemented in the state, you may receive training offers for courses that claim to be accepted statewide. **Please be advised that food handler cards from state approved courses, from other states or from other counties are not acceptable in the County of San Diego.** If you need more information regarding Food Handler requirements in the County of San Diego, visit our food handler informational page at <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/food/foodhandler.html> or call the Food and Housing Division's Duty Information Specialist at (619) 505-6900.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Encarnacion  
Operations Supervisor